



## Ciguatera, once again

Ciguatera, a form of ichthyosarcotoxism, a term originating in the West Indies, is the name of a disease caused by the ingestion of Ciguatoxin; it is a poisoning of humans who eat certain fish. To call the disease Ciguatera fish poisoning is redundant.

Ciguatera has swum into the pages of the *Journal* on numerous occasions in the past: by Helfrich P in 1963, Bagnis R in 1968, Sorokin M in 1975, Anderson, Sims and Wiebenga in 1983 and in an editorial in 1988 that referred to the research by Dr Tilman Ruff of Australia on the marked rise in its incidence in the Pacific Ocean areas the result of the French nuclear weapons testing in Moruroa in the Tuamotu archipelago.

The entity has generated attention from the news media of late as a consequence of an increase in the number of cases occurring in the Islands. In particular, Paul Effler MD, Preventive Medicine Resident with the State Department of Health, writing in the *Communicable Disease Report* of February/ March 1991, reported 35 cases of Ciguatera within

a 2-week period in February.

In this issue of the *Journal*, we publish a rather comprehensive review of Ciguatera that was submitted to us quite some time ago (we apologize for the long lead time) by James H Gollop MD MPH and by Eugene Pon MD MPH, Chief of the Epidemiology Branch.

In view of the DoH report that 14 of the 35 recent cases had to be hospitalized and 11 of those to intensive care units, it warrants publishing an article on the subject once again, to alert practicing physicians to the seriousness of this toxicity.

We endorse the publicity in the news media that alerts the eaters of Po'ou, Ulua, Papio, Palani and other littoral fishes, to be constantly aware and knowledgeable about the dangers of Ciguatera.

J I Frederick Reppun MD  
Editor



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